

Transcript for Gov. Lou Leon Guerrero Special Address - August 23, 2021

For the last year and a half we have been at war with an invisible enemy who has one goal - to infect as many of us as possible and make us sick - COVID-19. It doesn't care what village you live in, how much money you make, who your family is, or what your politics are. It has claimed 145 of our people. As of today more than 10,000 people have been infected. Some were lucky and didn't get sick, others were not so lucky and ended up on a ventilator. Only time will tell what the lasting effects will be for them.

In the last almost 18 months, we have learned that by taking precautions we can prevent the spread of the virus. We beat back two surges that threatened to overwhelm our very fragile health care system. We have made great strides in combating COVID-19. As a result, many of the restrictions that we needed to put in place have been lifted. But, our battle against COVID is not over, it is evolving. Our greatest weapon in this war arrived in December - vaccines. Over 107,000 of us have gotten our shots. Some of us just cannot be vaccinated no matter how much they want to for medical or religious reasons and we accept that. But there are many who are choosing not to do so. The virus is spreading quickly again and our hospitalizations are up. Most of those who are in the hospital because of COVID are not vaccinated. We know that those who are not vaccinated can spread the virus at much higher rates than those who are.

My greatest fear is that we will not be able to provide hospital care for our people. In the last week, we have increased by 175% of COVID admissions to the hospital. The vaccine prevents serious illness and shortens its duration, and it has been proven that it prevents hospital admissions. Data tells us that 90% of our COVID hospital admissions in 2021 are unvaccinated individuals. As of this recording, there are 16 COVID admissions at GMH alone--15 of whom are not vaccinated and 4 of whom are in the ICU and 3 on ventilators. We only have 18 ICU beds.

Our frontliners have been embattled for so long and they need our help. Let's keep COVID hospital admissions low, so our hospital can continue it's critical life saving mission.

Last Friday, I issued new guidelines and requirements which raised questions and concerns within our community. I have always said that we will ultimately triumph over this disease by the actions we take together as a community. I have heard you and I am listening. As a result I have amended my executive order.

The amended Executive Order will include the following changes:

For Patrons of Covered Establishments--rather than require full vaccination, they must show proof of at least their FIRST shot or provide a self-attestation that the individual has received at least one shot of a recommended series of the vaccine. A single shot of the Pfizer or Moderna vaccine has been shown to be up to 80% effective against COVID-19 in real-world settings. But these studies are still in progress, and to give yourself the best chance against this virus, it is critical that you receive the full series of your chosen vaccination if you are able to do so.

For Employees of Covered Establishments--rather than require full vaccination or face termination, employees must either become fully vaccinated or submit to a COVID-19 test on a weekly basis. These tests will be available at our public testing sites at no expense to employees. I want to reiterate that these requirements are specific to Patrons and Employees of Covered Establishments--these are places where mask-wearing is compromised--and not ALL establishments.

Even with these changes, our fundamental goals remain the same: to contain the spread of Covid and Increase Vaccinations to protect our families, our neighbors and ourselves. Over the weekend, more than 11-hundred of you rolled up your sleeves to get your first shot. Hundreds more await their second dose in the coming days and weeks. For that, I say thank you.

This has been a long journey and while we may not always agree we must always treat each other with respect regardless of our differences. We share the same values. We care about our island. And we want to protect our people. This is the path we must stay on.

God Bless You. God Bless Guam.

###